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DE RUEHJM #2113 2831720
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9253
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

UNCLAS JERUSALEM 002113

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: GAZA CHRISTIAN MURDERED

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The body of Rami Ayyad, an employee of the Baptist-affiliated Holy Bible Association, was found in Gaza City on October 8, with indications that he was murdered. According to Gaza Governor Muhammad al-Qidwa, initial indications point to a hate crime, noting that Ayyad had received three death threats before his October 7 kidnapping and had owned a bookstore previously targeted by the "Army of Islam." PA Information Minister Riyad Maliki said " Hamas fundamentalism is the main factor justifying such heinous crimes," while former Hamas PM Ismayil Haniyah and other Hamas officials publicly condemned the killing and said the case is being aggressively investigated. Al-Qidwa rejected Hamas' condemnation of the murder as "lip service" and said he doubts Hamas will seriously investigate. End summary.

Christian Murdered in Gaza City

¶2. (SBU) On October 8, the body of Rami Ayyad was found in Gaza City. According to media reports and security contacts, Ayyad was shot in the head twice and stabbed several times. Ihab al-Ghussian, spokesman for the former Interior Ministry, told the press that 30-year-old Ayyad was secretary of the Baptist-affiliated Holy Bible Association, and that the case is under investigation. According to Ghussian, Ayyad had been missing for a day and had previously received death threats from unknown persons. A relative of Ayyad told Palestinian press October 8 that Ayyad was being pressured to convert to Islam and that the Holy Bible Association offices were attacked with an explosive device several months ago.

Hamas Condemns Killing, But PA
Blames Hamas for Sheltering Extremism

¶3. (SBU) All Palestinian factions, including Hamas, publicly condemned the murder and called for swift action to apprehend the killers; however, PA and Fatah officials blamed Hamas for sheltering violent Islamist extremism in Gaza. PA Minister of Information Riyad Maliki told Palestinian press October 9 that " Hamas fundamentalism is the main factor justifying such heinous crimes." Former Hamas PM Haniyah told local press October 8 that he condemns the killing and will not tolerate antagonism of Christian-Muslim relations.

¶4. (SBU) Gaza Governor Muhammad al-Qidwa told PolSpec by telephone October 9 that all initial indications point to a hate crime. Al-Qidwa said Ayyad had no family or personal feuds and was not robbed. He said Ayyad was likely murdered because of his religion. He said Ayyad had received three death threats before he was kidnapped October 7 and Ayyad's family received an October 8 phone call saying he had been executed. Al-Qidwa added that the "Army of Islam," which took responsibility for BBC reporter Alan Johnston's 2006

kidnapping in Gaza, is also blamed for attacking Ayyad's Christian bookstore several months ago. After the attack, the "Army of Islam" claimed Ayyad was a missionary urging Muslims to convert to Christianity.

15. (SBU) Al-Qidwa rejected Hamas' condemnation of the murder as "lip service" and said he is unaware of any serious investigation or arrests made in aftermath of this crime. He said PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) is personally disturbed by the crime and has tasked an immediate report on the incident.

WALLES